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FOREIGN AND INSULAR.

ARABIA.

Plague in Aden.

ADEN, April 17, 1900.

Fifty-two days have elapsed since the appearance of plague in Aden, and during this period there have been officially reported 290 cases and 208 deaths from this cause. Several times cases have been landed on Plague Island from steamers coming from India, but this is the first visitation on shore since the pest appeared in Bombay in 1893.

The first case appeared here on Hedjaf Wharf, where a great portion of Indian cargo is landed, and it seems to be generally conceded that the germs were carried here in cargo, or by rats in cargo, though it is probably impossible to fix the exact ship which conveyed the germs to this port. Immediately after the outbreak this wharf was closed and a strict quarantine established around it, and all the inhabitants in the infected district moved on Alia Island, and the entire premises were disinfected. However, though the authorities have been most vigilant in improving the sanitary condition of Aden and using all possible precaution in their endeavor to prevent spread, it has since appeared in each division of the British territory.

The rats are being considered largely responsible for the spread of this most fatal disease. There has been offered a reward of one-half (1 cent) anno for each one killed within the limits of Aden.

The effect of plague on business has been very great. The trade has been badly deranged and greatly diminished, and some exporting houses have ceased to seek business, and a few of them say they will close up unless the disease is quickly stamped out. All regular steamers, except those of the Messageries Maritimes Company, have refused to take any cargo or passengers from here for the west, lest they would have to go through a quarantine at their next port of call. Consequently, the merchants find it impossible to secure adequate shipping facilities, and unless some reliable arrangements can be made for shipments, trade must necessarily be paralyzed. Only 2 steamers have called here since February 22, which would take cargo destined for American ports, and their space was entirely inadequate. Of course the amount of cargo going from Aden may be so small that the cargo steamers do not care to take trouble of loading cargo in quarantine, but it seems unreasonable discrimination for a steamer from an infected port to refuse to take cargo from Aden for no other reason than this is an infected port. Many of the Indian lines, which formerly got a fair amount of cargo here now pass by without calling and it would seem that the local shipping agents have failed to properly provide for their old patrons.

Red Sea ports are practically closed against Aden, or else require local ships to spend ten days in quarantine.

Another very serious impediment to trade is the exodus of hundreds and perhaps thousands of coolies, who have left on account of fright, which makes it quite difficult to obtain sufficient coolies at any price to handle the small arrivals of articles of commerce.

Taken as a whole, merchants agree that business is worse than it was ever before known, and the prospects of an early improvement very remote.

E. S. CUNNINGHAM,
United States Consul.